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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000094

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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PM MALIKI DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY IN BASRAH

REF: A) BASRAH 67, B) BASRAH 79, C) BASRAH 84, D) BAGHDAD 1745

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BASRAH, DEPARTMENT OF STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a press conference in Basrah on May 31, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki declared a one-month state of emergency in Basrah and requested that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) devise a security plan to stabilize the city. This announcement follows a May 29 press conference in Basrah in which the Deputy Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) Chair, Nassaif Jassim Ali (Fadillah), publicly denied that a security problem existed in Basrah. REO Basrah saw a temporary decrease in indirect fire after the May 16 increase of British military patrols and arrest operations, but continues to manage a number of challenges in carrying out mission-related activities due to the poor security situation in the city. END SUMMARY.

Press Conference

¶2. (U) In a May 31 press conference at the Basrah South Oil Company Cultural Center, PM Maliki declared a state of emergency for one month in Basrah and requested that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) devise a security plan to stabilize the city. The PM had delivered a public speech about security in Basrah that morning, followed by a press conference. The PM held smaller group meetings with political party heads and clerics, Governor Mohammed Al Wahili and other BPC members, the Chief of Police and other security personnel, and finally with tribal leaders. The state of emergency was declared at the end of the day after the last of the small group meetings.

Basrah Politicians Deny Existence of Security Problem

¶3. (U) On May 29, Deputy BPC Chair Nassaif Jassim Ali (Fadillah) gave a press conference in which he publicly denied that a security problem existed in Basrah. The few isolated incidents that occurred, he said, were tribal battles. He criticized media reports that characterized the security situation in Basrah as "unstable" and excoriated the central government for focusing on security in Basrah when Baghdad was much worse.

14. (C) Other BPC members have admitted that the streets of Basrah are dangerous, that there is an informal curfew from 2200 to 0800, and that investments have suffered as a result (Basrah 86). Since May 17, the only issue addressed in the BPC has been voting out and replacing Governor Mohammed. However, three weeks later, the BPC has been unable to muster the necessary votes or agree on a replacement for the Governor (Basrah 85).

Intimidation of Locally Engaged Staff

15. (C) On May 29, pamphlets again were posted and distributed in the city warning all those who worked with the Coalition Forces to quit or face death. Locally Engaged Staff (LES) reported seeing individuals handing out these pamphlets in broad daylight. The pamphlets were marked "Release No. 2" and signed by "Media Office, Imam Hussein Brigades." The document ended with the warning, "We will never show any mercy to anyone working or dealing with the occupation forces including interpreters, local workers who are serving them and some traitors from the security forces. We warn anybody who goes to their locations."

16. (C) The British Consul General told the Deputy Regional Coordinator (DRC) on May 31 that the above pamphlet was probably released as a result of British and Iraqi military operations in Basrah that led to numerous arrests and seizures of large weapons caches. In a meeting with the DRC and RSO on May 29, the Brigade Commander, Brigadier General James Everard, outlined extensive operations being carried out by the 20th Brigade and the Iraqi Army. Everard stated that the number of both day and night patrols had increased, as well as the number of hours per patrol. The general public, he said, appears to be "sleeping better with the sound of Warriors (Armored Fighting Vehicles) on the streets."

REO Operations

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17. (C) Following the appearance of "Release No. 2," the number of local KBR workers at REO Basrah fell. Prior to the appearance of the pamphlet, the numbers of local workers had reached an average of 135 per day (out of a total of 212 local positions). The day after the pamphlet was distributed, the number fell to 95. The REO continues to have KBR expatriates drive Sewer Sanitation Trucks (SSTs) that empty directly into the Shat al-Arab River and pick up the garbage for burning on the compound. Regarding the lack of drivers for fuel trucks coming to the REO, the British military is providing escort until KBR can have storage tanks installed on the compound.

18. (C) On May 25, the REO's air bridge to Kuwait -- managed by the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) based in Camp Arifjan -- resumed operations and completed one round-trip flight. The current plan for the air bridge is for it to continue to provide one flight per week, predicated on a minimum of 20 passengers.

19. (C) The British military has indicated it will sustain the increased tempo of its operations indefinitely and move the UK Battle Group headquarters located at Shat al-Arab Hotel to the Basrah Palace Compound, consolidating forces here and at the Basrah Air Station. This will make more UK troops available at the Basrah Palace Compound for patrols and arrests. (COMMENT: Coalition bases may experience a violent backlash due to the recent increase in arrest and patrol operations of the British military and the Iraqi Army. END COMMENT.)

110. (C) COMMENT: The poor security situation in Basrah involves a number of factors including militia infiltration of the police (Basrah 63); sectarian violence between the Sunni minority and Shia majority; corruption in the BPC; and outside interference,

most likely from Iran, in the form of supplying resources to militias. Militias and death squads are dominated by men who currently have few other options for employment. Investments, business, and even the REO are not able to staff positions because of harassment and intimidation of local staff.

¶11. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: From REO Basrah's perspective, PM Maliki's declaration of a state of emergency is a bold step forward in addressing the complexity of the security situation in Basrah. We expect the majority of Basrah's residents to welcome or at least accept the declared state of emergency, as long as it results in an increase in security within a short amount of time. There may be tense confrontations between the Iraqi police and the Iraqi Army as the state of emergency is implemented. It remains to be seen if a month will be sufficient to correct the situation. Central government involvement is essential to resolving the security impasse, and PM Maliki's visit to Basrah is timely and has the potential to set Basrah back on track. END COMMENT.
MARRANO